

Media Release

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Tuesday, 22 March 2022

AUSSIE ROWING HEROES LAUNCH NEW COLES START2ROW SCHOOLS PROGRAM

Aussie rowing heroes including Tokyo 2020 Gold Medallists Alex Purnell OAM and Rosie Popa OAM will launch the new Coles Start2Row program at schools across Australia this month.

The new program, developed by Rowing Australia and Coles, aims to provide nearly 10,000 school students across the country with an opportunity to participate in indoor rowing – many for their first time.

Tokyo 2020 Gold Medallists Alex Purnell (men's four) and Rosie Popa (women's four) are among 10 past and present elite Australian rowers who will visit schools across regional NSW, Victoria, Queensland, ACT and the NT over the next months to drop off brand new Concept2 indoor rowing machines to kick off the program.

The Aussie champions will also share insights into their rowing journeys and provide training and healthy eating tips as part of a new push by Rowing Australia to get more kids from diverse backgrounds on an indoor rowing machine or into a boat in the lead up to Brisbane 2032.

The rowing machines, donated by Coles, are one of many benefits for the ten schools that have been selected to participate in the inaugural program. In addition to receiving the brand new rowing machines, schools will receive lesson plans, coaching courses for teachers, opportunities to meet Australian rowers in person or virtually and invitations to Australian Indoor Rowing events and competitions throughout the year.

Rowing Australia CEO Ian Robson said he was excited to launch the Coles Start2Row program at Melba Copland Secondary School in Canberra.

"We are excited about the creation of this new program which is possible thanks to our long-standing partner Coles. We know the importance of community participation in our sport and we are excited to take our exceptional athletes into schools as part of the Coles Start2Row program," he said.

"We hope to create a lasting legacy of our sport in these schools. There is an exciting lead up to Brisbane 2032 and these children will be part of that story in some way."

Coles Corporate Affairs General Manager Sally Fielke said Coles is delighted to play a part in helping to develop the next generation of Australian rowers.

"Coles is incredibly proud to be a partner of Rowing Australia and to be involved in a grassroots schools program that can potentially unearth the next Australian rowing star," she said.

“We hope the Coles Start2Row program will inspire kids to give rowing a go but more importantly to live healthier, happier lives.”

Coles has been an Official Partner of Rowing Australia since 2018. In addition to supporting the Coles Start2Row program, Coles has paid the entry cost for more than 500 students from secondary schools across Australia to compete in the Australian Indoor Rowing Championships and delivers nutritious and high energy food to Rowing Australia's National Training Centres at Canberra and Penrith.

Disclaimer: Coles is not a sponsor and does not provide sponsorship-like support to the Australian Olympic Committee or Olympic Games.

Coles Start2Row participating schools and athletes:

Athlete*	School	Location	Athlete visit*
Alex Purnell 	Melba Copland Secondary School	Canberra (ACT)	Friday, 18 March
Georgie Rowe	Dubbo College	Dubbo (NSW)	Monday, 21 March
Jack O'Brien	Lightning Ridge Central School	Lightning Ridge (NSW)	Tuesday, 22 March
Rowena Meredith 	Cowra High School	Cowra (NSW)	Wednesday, 23 March
Ria Thompson 	Helensvale State High School	Helensvale (QLD)	TBC
Rosie Popa 	Western Heights Sec College	Geelong (VIC)	Thursday, 7 April
Jamie Fernandez 	Darwin High School	Darwin (NT)	May (TBC)
Erik Horrie OAM 	TBC	Penrith (NSW)	TBC
TBC	Nowra High School	Nowra (NSW)	TBC
TBC	Parkes High School	Parkes (NSW)	TBC

*Allocated athlete and dates are correct at the time of publication but are subject to change

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